

Message Text

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20

ACTION EA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-01 INR-05 L-02

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 RSC-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

USIA-06 SR-02 ORM-01 DPW-01 SAJ-01 SAM-01 /059 W

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P R 221000Z OCT 74

FM AMEMBASSY SAIGON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9737

INFO AMCONSUL BIEN HOA

AMCONSUL DANANG

AMCONSUL NHA TRANG

CINCPAC

USDEL JEC PARIS

C O N F I D E N T I A L SAIGON 13499

DEPT PASS IBS/NCA

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

FOL SENT ACTION SAIGON FM CAN THO 22 OCT 74:

QTE C O N F I D E N T I A L CAN THO 0317

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, PINS, VS

SUBJECT: PACM ACTIVITY IN MR4

1. PUBLIC PACM-ORGANIZED MEETINGS WERE HELD OCTOBER 20 IN CAN THO AND KIEN GIANG WITH FATHER TRAN HUU THANH PARTICIPATING. PRESENTATIONS WERE WELL-RECEIVED, BUT CALM PREVAILED IN ALL CASES IN SPITE OF SMALL SCALE MARCH THROUGH STREETS OF CAN THO. FOLLOWING ACCOUNT, INCLUDING CROWD ESTIMATES, IS BASED ON REPORTS OF CONGEN EMPLOYEES PRESENT AT SCENE.

2. A CLOSED MEETING OF LOCAL PRIESTS, WITH FR TRAN HUU THANH IN ATTENDANCE, WAS HELD IN RACH GIA THE EVENING

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OF OCTOBER 19 FOLLOWED BY A PUBLIC MEETING THE NEXT MORNING.

TWO CAP TIEN SLATE LOWER HOUSE DEPUTIES PARTICIPATED IN PUBLIC MEETING. (LTG NGHI TOLD ME THIS MORNING THE DEPUTIES RECEIVED INDIRECT CRITICISM FROM SOME IN AUDIENCE WHO ASKED WHAT THEY HAD DONE FOR KIEN GIANG LATELY. DEPUTIES REPLIED WEAKLY THAT THEY REPRESENTED OPPOSITION IN LOWER HOUSE, BUT WERE, UNFORTUNATELY, OUTNUMBERED BY PRO-ADMINISTRATION DEPUTIES.) ENTOURAGE THEN MOVED TO CAI SAN, A LARGE NORTHERN CATHOLIC REFUGEE CENTER OUTSIDE RACH GIA, FOR ANOTHER MASS MEETING. BOTH GATHERINGS WERE PEACEFUL AND CONFINED TO CHURCH GROUNDS.

3. AFTER LEAVING KIEN GIANG FR THANH WITH 20 FOLLOWERS WENT TO HOA HAO SANCTUARY ACROSS RIVER FROM LONG XUYEN TO MEET WITH TRINH QUOC KHANH, SECRETARY GENERAL OF SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC PARTY (DANG DAN CHU XA HOI). MEETING WAS CLOSED BUT ABOUT 200 HOA HAO FOLLOWERS GREETED FR THANH ON HIS ARRIVAL.

4. AT 1630 HOURS OCTOBER 20, ESTIMATED 3000 PEOPLE GATHERED IN COURTYARD OF CAN THO CATHEDRAL. FR THANH AND ENTOURAGE ARRIVED HALF AN HOUR LATER AND CROWD SWELLED TO ABOUT 4000, INCLUDING SOME GOVERNMENT CADRE AND MILITARY BOTH IN UNIFORMS AND CIVILIAN DRESS. DEPUTIES READ "INDICTMENT NUMBER 1," WHICH WAS WARMLY RECEIVED BY GATHERING. FR THANH THEN SPOKE, SAYING MR4 WAS MOST CORRUPT IN COUNTRY AND IMPLYING THAT CORPS COMMANDER LTG NGUYEN VINH NGHI IS RESPONSIBLE.

5. MEETING DISBANDED AT 1830 HOURS, WITH MOST OF AUDIENCE LEAVING. ABOUT 1000 BEGAN MARCH FROM CATHEDRAL TOWARD CENTER OF CITY, BUT POLICE ROADBLOCKS ROUTED MARCHERS THROUGH PERIPHERAL STREETS. DEMONSTRATORS PROVIDED OWN MARSHALS FOR CROWD CONTROL, AND THERE WAS NO VIOLENCE OR THREAT OF VIOLENCE AT ANY POINT. EXCEPT FOR TWO POLICE BLOCKADES KEEPING MARCHERS FROM DOWNTOWN AREA, POLICE PRESENCE, WHILE VERY VISIBLE, WAS LOW-KEY. ONLY ABOUT 150 PEOPLE COMPLETED THE MARCH.

6. RAIN AND THE LATE HOUR NO DOUBT LIMITED SIZE AND ENTHUSIASM OF CROWD. NONETHELESS, THOSE PRESENT APPEARED TO RECEIVE FR THANH'S PRESENTATION WARMLY AND THOUGHTFULLY. MCNAMARA UNQTE MARTIN

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